



WRITTEN TESTIMONY
Michigan Legislature
Animal Welfare Legislation
House Bill No.5127

July 20, 2009

Submitted by:
Timothy Amlaw
Director
American Humane Certified

I have spent my life time as an agrarian, having grown up on a generational farm in upstate New York and worked in agriculture for all of my life. I have a degree in Agricultural Education from Murray State University in Murray Kentucky. I have been an agricultural educator at the high school and college levels, as well as the owner and operator of a vertically integrated specialty cattle company in Colorado.

I have been in the position of Director of American Humane Certified, the farm animal welfare program of American Humane Association for 2 years. During that time, the program has grown from 5 million animals certified to over 60,000,000 animals.

American Humane Association is the oldest humane organization in the United States, focused on the protection of both children and animals. The organization was founded in 1877, by a group concerned with the welfare of workhorses and of livestock in transit by rail, in stockyards and slaughter plants.

Over 13 decades, American Humane has evolved and grown to encompass an array of services and programs that protect and enhance the well being of those without voices – children and animals. Through education, advocacy and motivation, we encourage humane behavior. Our headquarters are in Denver, Colorado, with regional offices in Washington, DC, and in Los Angeles.

Among our programs are “No Animals Were Harmed” that monitors film and TV productions for the welfare of animals in entertainment; Red Star Animal Relief that originated to protect horses during World War I; The Link, that raises awareness of the positive benefits of the bond between animals and people, as well as the connection



between animal abuse and other forms of violence; and American Humane Certified that audits and verifies farm animal welfare standards.

American Humane Certified is the first and original certification program created in the United States to ensure the humane treatment of farm animals. It provides independent verification that the care and handling of farm animals by a certified producer meets the science-based animal welfare standards of American Humane. Those standards, based on generally accepted animal husbandry guidelines, were developed in collaboration with animal science experts, veterinarians, farmers and ranchers. They are reviewed regularly by the American Humane Certified Scientific Committee to ensure that advances in technologies, best practices and new methods are incorporated.

Throughout our history, American Humane has held balanced, reasonable and moderate policies in support of animal welfare. We believe that people have the right to choose what they eat. Eliminating food choices is not our agenda. Our mission is to ensure that animals raised for food are treated humanely; that producers who meet these animal welfare standards are recognized by the American Humane Certified Label, and that consumers are made aware of the products that are certified through promotion of the label.

Regarding the use of legislation to advance views of farm animal welfare, historically, American Humane working with agriculture, has turned to legislative action when we believed that it was appropriate course to address egregious animal handling practices and when necessary to effect change in animal welfare policy. Two significant examples of our legislative advocacy are the 28 Hour Rule for transportation of animals and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. Our work in the last 10 years with protein producers has been focused on collaboration, rather than regulation and legislation. We believe that working with agriculture to develop animal welfare solutions not only benefits more animals, but it is more conducive to positive outcomes. People who are part of the solution process have more ownership and are more proactive in adopting new technology and practices.

American Humane is a strong proponent of educating, motivating and collaborating with people to bring humane standards and practices to agriculture. Agriculture is an industry based on traditions and long-established practices. We know that there are substantial costs to retrofit and that changes cannot be made immediately. While we may not always agree on best practices for animal welfare, generally, most farmers and ranchers want to



be good stewards. If producers can be shown how different, more humane, practices can increase productivity and efficiency, as well as benefit the animals, most producers will embrace and adopt new practices. The key idea is to embrace and adopt, rather than be mandated and co-opted.

The attitudes of consumers across the country are changing about animal welfare and its impact on the food they choose. Millions of dollars have been spent by animal activists to portray agriculture as abusive and cruel to animals in food production. Certainly there are some horrendous examples of cruelty and bad practices. While we do not think it represents the majority of farmers, the industry has found itself in a defensive position. It is no longer an option to ignore the activists' messages of improved animal welfare. We believe that agricultural interests in Michigan are on the right course by being proactive and addressing animal welfare standards with an effective and economically viable plan and within a reasonable time frame.

The inclusion of a third party audit to verify compliance with generally accepted animal standards is a key element to the effectiveness of HB N. 5127. American Humane Certified has developed a proprietary 3-tiered audit system which provides transparency

and accountability while giving the farmer a full set of in the field applied tools for greater participation, continuous improvement and productivity. Starting with the full onsite, scored base line audit, the farmer can see the areas of best practices and what areas of his operation need improvement to be in compliance with standards. The online reporting allows for full customization to the farmer's records, as it relates to the daily humane care of their animals. The use of video on farms provides the farmer with observation of the interactions of employees in training or work, with the animals under their care. This also provides review of the animal behavior so that any welfare issue that may arise can be immediately corrected. We encourage all farmers in our program to use these audit tools, called True Humane Tracking™ which gives them 24/7 access to all of their records.

American Humane Certified is developing a full range of educational training curriculum in each species group which will provide information about humane care and handling procedures to help all farmers and farm employees to gain a fuller understanding of humane care on their farms. We work hard to communicate with farm individuals and groups to make humane more fully understood and recognized in the daily practices of the farms we certify.



In regard to the proposed legislation that includes third party oversight, American Humane Certified is recognized, fully developed operationally and can be implemented immediately. We would participate in any way to help define the State's standards of humane animal care for the various species. Where any farm operation meets our science-based standards, it would have the opportunity to be American Humane Certified.

We commend those in the Michigan legislature and agriculture for taking this progressive action to adopt higher animal care standards. We look forward to working with all of the proposed Committee stakeholders to make the State of Michigan's Farm Animal Care program the bench mark and standard for humane farm animal care in the United States.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy Amlaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.

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